



## Coronavirus Special!

April 2020

In our last newsletter we told you about the need to move from using the Bus to meeting in Grace Chapel in Chesterfield and The Cornerstone Bookshop in Matlock. The plan was for this newsletter to let everyone know just how well everyone was coping with the changes and what our plans are for developing the work and building on a positive start.



Well, as you may expect, most plans and developments have had to go on hold. Whilst accepting that the restrictions are necessary, but at times frustrating, consider the impact on the guests who share in Church on the Bus. They can only be experiencing more difficulties in accessing resources and finding a way of life that enables them to avoid risky contacts and situations that threaten their health. All is not doom and gloom. There is some sterling work going on out there and the trustees and volunteers have adapted their practice to relieve some of the difficulties our guests are facing in these challenging times. We hope to share some of their efforts in this newsletter and ask for your continued support in prayer and interest in the work of Church on the Bus in meeting an increasing need of the homeless and vulnerable.



## The Trustee Group

It was with great sadness we learnt of the death of our colleague and friend Carolyn Baker. She had been a Trustee of Church on the Bus over a number of years. Carolyn was a stable and steady influence in times of change. She was able to maintain the focus of the work in balancing the provision of practical resources with opportunities to share the Love of Christ with all. For her, the outliving of her faith was an integral part of everyday life. She is sadly missed and we thank God for all that she did.



The government imposed restrictions have resulted in the need to make a number of difficult decisions. These have included a review, and temporary ending, of face to face contact with our guests. We have had to ensure a safe environment for both our volunteers and our guests to prevent a spread of the infection.

The AGM has had to be postponed and other plans have been put on hold. These include our proposals for extending the work by the storage and provision of clothing, extended support for those rehoused, the development of our relationship with other partnerships and the extension of the sharing of faith with the service users. The plans are not abandoned but are on hold. It is anyone's guess when we will be able to move forward. Let's hope and pray that we can be back, in full swing, soon.

## Chesterfield

On the 24<sup>th</sup> March '20 a decision was made that we could no longer provide support on the 2 evenings per week at Grace Chapel. We had tried having a buffet service outside to reduce the risk of infection but government requirements meant that we could not continue.

Guests were encouraged to visit Pathways to find support and our volunteers joined with others at that agency in providing "lunchboxes" to be shared with the guests. This involved working to produce up to 20 food parcels a day to be given out at the town centre venue. Sadly we have learnt that this has now had to stop, so, our ever resourceful volunteers are now preparing "lunchboxes" for those in temporary accommodation in a local Chesterfield B&B. The resourcefulness of the volunteers shows a commitment that is "over and above" the confines of a job description and demonstrates a true spirit of love and concern for our guests.



## Matlock

Here again it was necessary to close the Tuesday afternoon event held at the Cornerstone Bookshop. There had been a regular attendance of 8 or 9 guests but with the fear of infection the numbers dropped to 5 or so. The required restrictions meant that we could no longer continue to meet in the normal way. Wherever possible we obtained the contact phone numbers for the guests and regular calls have been made to check on their progress and offer support and guidance where needed. Initially a partnership agency "Jigsaw," who are part of the Church in the Peak, were able to continue to provide hot meals by delivering them to the doorstep of the regular attenders.



However, when tighter instructions for lockdown came into place, they had to abandon the programme as the volunteer staff were cooking together in a small kitchen. The local Foodbank has responded by increasing its scope of operations and is now delivering regular food parcels to their regulars which includes most of the Church on the Bus people.

## Points for prayer & reflection

At present it is unclear as to how long this crisis will last. For our Guests times will become increasingly difficult. Long term isolation and "getting by" will prove to be difficult for them and equally frustrating for those who seek to care for them.

Church on the Bus relies on your continued support so please....

- Keep praying ....for our guests as they try to manage the crisis....for our volunteers that they may be encouraged and steadfast in their role....for protection of all against catching the virus.
- The costs inherent in running Church on the Bus remain constant and expenses need to be met so please can you continue to support the work with your giving.
- We all hope to be up and running again soon and at that time your churches and groups will also be able to resume meeting together. If you would like to register interest in inviting us at some point in the future to share about the work of Church on the Bus just email us at [churchonthebus@gmail.com](mailto:churchonthebus@gmail.com) .

We will try and keep you informed of significant developments and once again thank you for your continued support and please keep safe.

### For Further information

You can follow Church on the Bus on Facebook, Phone our Chairman, John Phillips on 07585 153369 or e-mail to the above address.

